DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 355 596 CS 508 130

AUTHOR Worthen, Thomas Kenne; Pack, Gaylen N.
TITLE The Case of the Missing Female Debater: Sex Role Orientation or Sex Role Expectation.
PUB DATE Oct 92
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (78th, Chicago, IL, October 29-November 1, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; Communication Research; *Debate; *Females; Higher Education; Judges; Personality Traits; *Sex Role; *Student Attitudes; *Student Participation
IDENTIFIERS Debate Tournaments

ABSTRACT

A study investigated the possible reasons for low numbers of females in intercollegiate debate. Subjects, 164 debaters, completed a self-assessment using the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Twenty-six debate judges completed an assessment of the sex role of the "ideal" debater. The study tested the hypothesis that both female debaters and the "ideal" debater would be high in masculine traits. Among judges, 85% assess the "ideal" debater as masculine. A chi-square performed between the sex roles of a control group and the sex roles of female debaters showed a significant difference between the two populations. Findings suggest that the sex role orientation of the debaters and the sex role expectation of the judges may affect female participation in debate. One table of data is included. (Contains 22 references.) (Author/RS)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED355596

# The Case of the Missing Female Debater:
# Sex Role Orientation or Sex Role Expectation

Thomas Kenne Worthen

Pacific University

Gaylen N. Pack

Boise State University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Thomas Kenne Worthen
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention

Chicago, 1992

CS508130

Running head: GENDER ORIENTATION OR GENDER EXPECTATION



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

This study investigates the possible reasons for low numbers of females in intercollegiate debate. One hundred and sixty-four debaters completed a self-assessment using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Twenty-six debate judges completed an assessment of the sex role of the "ideal" debater. It was hypothesized that both female debaters and the "ideal" debater would be high in masculine traits. Eighty-five percent of the judges assessed the "ideal" debater as masculine. A chi-square performed between the sex roles of a control group and the sex roles of female debaters showed a significant difference between the two populations [$X^2(3) = 628.91$, $p > .001$]. It is concluded that the sex role orientation of the debaters and the sex role expectation of the judges may affect female participation in debate.

The Case of the Missing Female Debater:

Gender Orientation or Gender Expectation

For over twenty years, the limited participation of minorities in intercollegiate debate has been an area of concern for participants and advocates of the activity. Several conferences have issued calls for research to investigate ethnic, racial and gender barriers in debate (Logue, 1985). In particular, Medcalf (1984) listed the lack of female participation in debate to be an area of research that should be "the highest priority in our field" (p. 11).

Whereas the days of debate division based on sex are over, many gender stereotypes still exist within the activity (Medcalf, 1984; Logue, 1985). Logue (1985) documents the disparity between the genders when surveying Cross-Examination Debate Tournaments from both the Northeast and the West. Female participation in debate averaged only 31.5% and most of this participation was in Novice Division. This percentage is disproportionate to the general university population which is comprised of 54% female students (United States Department of Education, 1991). The purpose of the present study is to discover if the sex roles of female debaters is significantly different then the sex roles of non-debaters.

The differences in communication between the sexes have been investigated by many researchers. Infante (cited in Rancer & Dierks-Stewart, 1984) studied biological sex and the communication trait of argumentativeness. This trait was found to predispose individuals to advocacy and refutation on controversial issues. The study found that males are significantly more argumentative than females. Schultz and Anderson's results (cited in Rancer & Dierks-Stewart, 1984) supported this finding when they observed that women are consistently in the low argumentative tail of the distribution. Interviews with low argumentative females showed that they viewed arguing unfavorably. Those females classified argumentative behavior as "unfeminine," and "unfriendly."

In a study to discriminate between biological sex and psychological gender, Rancer and Dierks-Stewart (1984) found that the trait of argumentativeness is correlated with psychological gender differences. It was found that individuals classified as masculine are evaluated as the least likely to avoid situations perceived as argumentative.

From these studies it appears that an individual's disposition to be argumentative correlates with both biological sex and psychological gender. However, biological sex may actually have been a confounding variable as the correlation may have existed because most males are categorized as being high in masculinity and masculinity is what is actually related. Copeland and Kelly (1983) support this conclusion. In studying reticence and sex roles, they found that individuals who do not demonstrate reticence are categorized as high in masculinity. In both trait argumentativeness and reticence, these studies have found a positive correlation with an individual's masculinity. Eakins & Eakins (1978) state that argumentative behaviors are often considered primarily male characteristics, rather than standard behavior for both sexes.

Intercollegiate debate has evolved into a highly specialized activity. Currently, debate is seen as male dominated and extremely competitive. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects gender orientation of debaters and gender expectations of debate judges have on female debate participation. It is hypothesized that judges perceive the "ideal" debater as possessing masculine gender characteristics. Additionally, it is predicted that female debaters are high in masculinity and are significantly different in their sex role orientation than female non-debaters.

The present study is designed to address these questions by presenting the results of the self-assessment of sex roles of college debaters and the assessment of the "ideal" debater as perceived by judges. These measures assess the sex role orientation of debaters and specifically female debaters. In addition, the assessment of the "ideal" debater by debate judges will identify the sex role expectation that is held toward debaters. Sex role orientation is defined as the masculine and feminine characteristics an individual possesses.

This orientation is based on the assumption of what society dictates as appropriate, desirable characteristics for females and for males (Wheeless & Duran, 1982). Sex role expectation consists of those traits, that due to the situation or biological sex, an individual is expected to possess. Depending on an individual's rtating on the BSRI, the sex roles are broken down into four types: masculine (high masculine-low feminine), feminine (high feminine-low masculine), androgynous (high masculine-high feminine), and undifferentiated (low masculine-low feminine) (Bem, 1977).

## Method

### Subjects

One hundred and ninety subjects, 26 debate judges and 164 debaters, from two separate debate organizations were surveyed in this study. At the Western States Communication Association Debate Tournament, which includes the Western region of the United States and involves the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA), 58 subjects participated. Fourty-one of the CEDA subjects were debaters and 17 were judges. Of the debaters, eighteen were female and 23 were male. Three subjects were female judges and 14 of the subjects were male judges. At the North American Championships, attended by universities from across Canada and the Eastern and Midwestern United States, 132 subjects participated. Fourty-nine of these subjects were female debaters and 74 were male debaters. There were seven male judges and two female judges. The North American Parliamentary Debate Association sanctions the North American Championship Tournament. Together these tournaments comprised over 66 universities and colleges from the United States and Canada.

A control group of non-debaters was also used in the study. The control group consisted of 304 students (169 males; 135 females) enrolled in an introductory speech class at a large midwestern university. The BSRI results for this control group were taken from Greenblatt, Hasenauer, and Freimuth (1980).

Materials and Procedures

The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974) was used to assess the sex role orientation of the debaters and the sex role expectation of the judges. In Bem's (1974) original study, using a college population, the test-retest reliability of the BSRI's categories were computed at a high of r =.90 to a low of at r=.89. Since 1974, in literally hundreds of studies, the BSRI has continually been used (Bem & Lenney, 1976; Bem, Martyna & Watson, 1976; Kapalka & Lachenmeyer, 1988; Mills, 1981). In addition, Robinson & Page (1988) found that the United States norms of the BSRI were also applicable to Canadian populations.

To assess the sex role orientation, debaters filled out the BSRI according to their own personality. To assess the sex role expectation, judges filled out the BSRI according to what they considered to be the "ideal" debater. The use of BSRI in identifying an "ideal" type has been validated by Deutsch and Gilbert (1976). Based upon the mean scores for a university population as a cutoff point (Masculine, 4.825; Feminine, 4.816) each person was classified as either masculine (high masculine-low feminine), feminine (high feminine-low masculine), androgynous (high masculine-high feminine) or undifferentiated (low masculine-low feminine) (Greenblatt, Hasenauer, and Freimuth, 1980). Similar medians (Masculine, 4.9; Feminine, 4.875) have been used as recent as 1991 by Hyde, Krajnik, and Skuldt-Niederberger.

Procedure

Subjects at both tournaments participated voluntarily by completing and returning survey forms that were handed out after rounds of competition and prior to the awards ceremonies. The surveys were also available at a display table throughout the duration of both tournaments. This procedure was used for North American Nationals as due to logistics it was decided that this was the most effective method. The procedure was used at the Western States Tournament when permission to distribute the surveys in team packets or after the final round of debate was not granted. With approximately two thirds of the

population of both tournaments participating in this survey, the methodological errors do to lack of randomization were minimized.

## Results

The judges "ideal" debater scores were ranked as highly masculine on the BSRI. Overall, the "ideal" debater was more strongly associated with masculine traits ($\underline{M}$ = 5.13) than feminine traits ($\underline{M}$ = 4.59). Eighty-five percent of the "ideal" debater scores were ranked as masculine.

This study predicted high masculine traits for female debaters. Due to the validity of using Bem for both Canadian and American university populations, the results are not separated by country. However, due to the differences in format and style between CEDA and Parliamentary Debate a *t*. test was performed to see if there were differences between the sex roles of these two types of debate. For each type of debate no significant difference was found between the masculine sex role (Parliamentary $\underline{M}$ = 5.38; CEDA $\underline{M}$ = 5.32) and the feminine sex role (Parliamentary $\underline{M}$ = 4.32; CEDA $\underline{M}$ = 4.34 ).

A chi square was performed on the frequency data of the control group and the male and female debaters sex roles from Table 1. As predicted, female debaters are significantly different from the control group [$X^2(3) = 628.91$, $p > .001$]. In comparison to the control group, the results also show that females debaters are more masculine (3.7% for the control group; 50.7% for the female debaters) and less feminine (39.2% for the control group; 7.5% for the female debaters). Chi square results also show that male debaters are also significantly different that the general male university population [$X^2(3) = 34.3$ $p >. 001$]. Male debaters are also more masculine (42.6% for the control group; 71.1% for the male debaters) and less feminine (12.4% for the control group; 2.1% for the male debaters).

---

Insert Table 1 about here

---

## Discussion

Results of this study show that the sex role orientation of debaters and the sex role expectation of judges supports the literature review that establishes argumentativeness as a masculine trait. As masculinity is oriented with the male sex and generally females view arguing unfavorably, it is not surprising that the majority of male and female debaters have a masculine or androgynous orientation.

Glick (1991) states that differences in gender participation in different activities may be attributed to several factors. Two such factors are sex role orientation and sex role expectation. The lack of female participation might be explained by the sex role orientation of the females involved in debate. There seems to be a self-selection process which causes certain sex roles to be attracted to certain activities. This has been verified in athletics with females in team sports as masculine and androgynous as male athletes and women in individual sports being classified as more feminine (Wrisberg, Draper and Everett, 1988). The sex role orientation (masculine, feminine, androgynous, undifferentiated) of an individual could possibly lead a person to be involved in an activity that uses the attributes of that specific orientation. For example, individuals who possess assertive, analytical, and competitive traits seem to be attracted to debate. Thus, both male and female debaters are high in masculinity.

Lack of female participation also might be attributed to the sex role expectation of judges. In that the BSRI identifies as masculine such traits as "defends own beliefs," "assertive," "analytical," and "willing to take a stand" among several others (Bem, 1974), it is understandable why judges stereotype the "ideal" debater as masculine. With debate judges labeling the "ideal" debater as masculine, a strong sex-typing exists. Glick (1991) analyzed this discrimination in terms of career sex-typing. A career sex type is the ratio of male to female job holders in that career. If one sex dominates an occupation, then that occupation is sex typed to that sex. For example, if men dominate a profession, then the image of a successful employee (or successful debater) is a man. Due to the judges' sex

role expectation of high masculinity, it seems a strong sex type discrimination exists in debate.

The results of the present study match previous studies of gender discrimination. For example, Glick (1991) ranked the masculine traits, feminine traits, and prestige ratings of forty-six occupations using the BSRI and a comparison with census data on the percentage of women in these occupations. The top 10 prestige occupations had six ranked as masculine, three androgynous, and one undifferentiated. Interestingly, the occupation of lawyer had the highest masculine rank with 6.28 of 7.0. This career had 27.8 % women in the field and had the highest prestige. The 27.8% women as lawyers is very close to the average 31.5% of debaters being female that was found by Logue (1985). As many participants of debate may be preparing for a career in law, again it is not surprising that the number of female debaters is small.

The judges' sex role expectation also can have an effect on the judge's perception of the debate. Eakins and Eakins (1978) found that communication from different sexes is perceived differently. They state that whereas society rewards intellectual argument from males, society penalizes women for the same argument. In addition, Glick, Eron, and Nelson (1988) found that sex discrimination remains even when identical personality trait inferences are made about male and female applicants.

The sex role expectation of judges also may have an effect on the debater's sex role behavior. Zanna and Pack (1975) found that in situations where a female knows of the sex role expectation of an evaluator, she will often adapt and change her behavior to match the sex role expectation. The ability to adapt to the demands of a situation are especially applicable to individuals classified as androgynous. Rancer and Dierks-Stewart (1984) found that androgynous individuals are more flexible to adapt their communication behavior to an individual situation. Given that part of a debater's skill involves adapting to the style of the person who is judging, the sex role expectation plays a very important role in a round of debate.

Through the debaters' sex role orientation we can see that intercollegiate debate attracts individuals high in masculinity. Due to the judges' sex role expectation we can assume that these masculine traits are rewarded. Whereas both males and females high in masculine traits might be attracted to debate, debaters low in masculinity might be "socialized" out of the experience (i.e., non-masculine traits don't win). Logue (1985) supports this when she found that novice division has the largest number of female debaters. This is also supported by the fact that no female/female teams advanced beyond the quarterfinals of the 1984 National Debate Tournament (Friedley and Manchester; 1985). Whereas feminine sex role orientation may have led to a lack of interest in argumentation, higher than normal masculine traits also may be a result of a coping mechanism in adapting to the demands of the situation.

In debate, masculinity is dominant in both the sex role orientation of debaters and sex role expectation of judges. The fact that masculinty is so dominate may have an effect on the participation of females in intercollegiate debate. Whether it is the sex role orientation or sex role expectation that has the greatest influence is still left to be answered. However, while the "missing female debater" has not been found, there seems to exist plausible reasons for her disappearance.

References

Bem, S. L. (1977). Psychological androgyny. In A. G. Sargent (Ed.) Beyond sex roles. New York: West Publishing.

Bem, S. L. (1974). The measurement of psychological androgyny. Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, 42, 155-162.

Bem, S. L. & Lenney, E. (1976). Sex typing and the avoidance of cross-sex behavior. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 33, 48-54.

Bem, S. L., Martyna, W. & Watson, C. (1976). Sex typing and androgyny: Further explorations of the expressive domain. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 34, 1016-1023.

Copeland, D. A. & Kelly, B. (1983, April). A study of sex roles and reticence. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association Convention, Ocean City, MA.

Deutsch, C. J. & Gilbert, L. A. (1976). Sex role stereotypes: Effect on perceptions of self and others and on personal adjustment. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 23, 373-379.

Eakins, B. W. & Eakins, R. G. (1978). Sex Differences in Human Communication. San Diego: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Friedley, S. A. & Manchester, B. B. (1985). Male/female levels of participation in regional and national individual events tournaments. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association Convention, Denver, CO.

Glick, P. (1991). Trait-based and sex-based discrimination in occupational prestige, occupational salary, and hiring. Sex Roles, 25, 351-378.

Glick, P., Eron, C. & Nelson, C. (1988). What mediates sex discrimination in hiring decision? Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 55, 178-186.

Greenblatt, L., Hasenauer, J. E. & Freimuth, V. S. (1980). Psychological sex type and androgyny in the study of communication variables: Self-disclosure and communication apprehension. Human Communication Research, 6 (2), 117-129.

Hyde, J. S., Krajnik, M. & Skuldt-Niederberger, K. (1991). Androgyny across the life span: A replication and longitudinal follow up. Developmental Psychology, 27 (3), 516-519.

Kapalka, G. M. & Lachenmeyer, J. R. (1988). Sex-role flexibility, locus of control, and occupational status. Sex Roles, 19, 417-427.

Logue, B. J. (1985, May). An examination of gender-based levels of participation in CEDA debate. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association, Providence, RI.

Medcalf, L. (1984, November). The participation and success of women in CEDA Debate. Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, Chicago, IL.

Mills, C. J. (1981). Sex roles, personality, and intellectual abilities in adolescents. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 10, 85-112.

Rancer, A. S. & Dierks-Stewart, K. J. (1984, March). An examination of biological and psychological gender differences in trait argumentativeness. Paper present at the Eastern Communication Association, Philadelphia, PA.

Robinson, A. & Page, S. (1988). Gender role and future orientation in a Canadian university population. Canadian Journal of Counselling, 22 (2), 91-101.

United States Department of Education. (1991). Statistical Abstract of the United States. Washington D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics.

Wheeless, V. E. & Duran R. L. (1982). Gender orientation as a correlate of communication competence. The Southern Speech Communication Journal, 48, 51-64.

Wrisberg, C. A., Draper, V. M. & Everett, J. J. (1988). Sex role orientation of male and female collegiate athletes from selected individual and team sports. Sex Roles, 19, 81-90.

Zanna, M. P. & Pack, S.J. (1975). On the self-fulfilling nature of apparent sex differences in behavior. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 11, 583-591.

Table 1

Sex Role Classification Totals by Sex

| | Debaters | | | | Control Group[a] | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Males | | Female | | Males | | Female | |
| Classification | n (97) | % | n (67) | % | n (169) | % | n (135) | % |
| Masculine | 68 | 71.1 | 34 | 50.7 | 72 | 42.6 | 5 | 3.7 |
| Feminine | 2 | 2.1 | 5 | 7.5 | 21 | 12.4 | 53 | 39.2 |
| Androgynous | 12 | 12.4 | 20 | 29.8 | 30 | 17.8 | 45 | 33.3 |
| Undifferentiated | 15 | 15.5 | 8 | 11.9 | 46 | 27.2 | 32 | 23.7 |

[a]Numbers are based on a university population from Greenblatt, Hasenauer, and Freimuth (1980).